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The
American Historical Review

THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, 1884-1909

THE close relation which subsists between this journal and the American Historical Association would seem to make it imperative that special notice should be taken in these pages of so conspicuous a milestone in the history of the society as the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation. But even if the two were wholly independent, an American historical journal would show little perception of the main currents of recent historical progress in our country if it did not attribute great importance to the life and work of that association during the twenty-five years just ending. It is not too much to say that no agency has been so potent in the advancement of American historical scholarship.

The theme has a broader aspect. The last twenty-five or thirty years have witnessed the growth of many such societies, so many that for each of the departments of study recognized in a modern American university there exists a society national in its scope and in the extent of its membership, which binds together the scattered devotees of the particular specialty, brings them into mutual acquaintance, friendship, and regard, effaces local jealousies and chauvinistic zeal for individual universities, and increases devotion to the scientific ends pursued in common. The phenomenon has an importance beyond what is apparently suspected by the average man. No millionaire endows these societies. When the American rich man wishes to do something for the endowment of research, he still does it through the conventional channel of the universities. Yet it may be doubted whether the universities, pressed by numbers increasing with unexampled rapidity, have with all their wealth done in recent years so much for the advancement of pure research as have the poor but single-minded associations of specialists. Indeed, it might be doubted *a priori* whether the American university, in

its typical organization a body of specialists ruled over by a body of "prominent citizens", could ever be expected to promote the progress of the sciences so effectively as the scientific society, composed of specialists alone and working in unhampered devotion to intellectual ends.

Of such organizations, none has been more fruitful of good works than the American Historical Association, founded at Saratoga on September 9, 1884. Good auguries for its success might perhaps have been drawn from the fact that there were already more local historical societies in existence in the United States than local societies of any other variety, and from the expectation that the vigor and the wide diffusion of these would strengthen the foundations of a national organization. It might also have been predicted that historical scholars, since the effort to appreciate opposing opinions is of the very essence of their craft, would show themselves peculiarly adapted to harmonious co-operation. But the experiment was yet to be tried.

How much there was for superior organization to achieve, how much has in twenty-five years been accomplished by the American Historical Association and other agencies working in conjunction with it, can only be understood by giving a glance at the conditions of American historical scholarship in 1884. It is now only a minor part of the members of the Association whose age permits remembrance of those conditions; and not all of these can without effort recall the situation in detail. The state and local historical societies were perhaps not half as numerous as now, their membership, their endowments, their libraries not half as great. State historical departments or working archive establishments, of the modern type, were unknown. The *Magazine of American History* was the only general historical journal. In all the universities and colleges of the country there were apparently only fifteen professors and five assistant professors who gave all their time to history. "When a chair of history was established here", writes one of these teachers in 1883, "grave professors, educated under the old order of things, regarded it as an unwarranted expenditure of time and money. History should, they thought, be made auxiliary to some other department."

In most cases it was thus subordinated or annexed, the catalogues of that year showing combinations with political science, political economy, English literature, philosophy, comparative philology, geology, natural history, German, and French, and the chair becoming, in Dr. Holmes's phrase, a settee. The writer of these

pages, then a youthful aspirant for academic promotion, well remembers that several institutions, now abounding in historical teachers and courses, were then cautiously considering whether a professorship of history, or of history and something else, could or could not be established. He well remembers the rueful feelings with which he heard President Eliot, when discoursing to an academic audience at about that time on the unequal regard then paid to different studies in America, describe an interview with two promising young men who asked him if in his judgment it would be wise for them to fit themselves for professorships of history; "I was obliged to tell them that under existing circumstances it would be the height of imprudence." Of the seven thousand graduate students now working in American universities there are surely three hundred who are making history their main subject (too often, alas, their only subject) of attention; in 1884 it is doubtful if there were more than thirty.

Plainly, the organization of historical studies in America was not far advanced. But organization, numbers, and quantities are not all. The graduate student of that time, it is agreed on all sides, was superior to the graduate student of to-day. The undergraduate diverted larger portions of his time from athletics (more exactly, from the contemplation and discussion of athletics) to the things of the mind. The professors were few, but they included—to mention only the *stelligeri* in the catalogue—such teachers as Torrey and Gurney, Moses Coit Tyler and W. F. Allen, Herbert B. Adams and Charles Kendall Adams. Able young Americans, who had studied history in German universities when German historical instruction was at the height of its glory, were coming home full of enthusiasm, determined to make history flourish abundantly on American soil. In 1869 C. K. Adams had begun the use of the "seminary method" at Ann Arbor; in 1871 Henry Adams entered upon his seven years of brilliant and fruitful application of that method at Cambridge. Neither did America lack historians outside the academic class, who, independent of organization, were producing work of at least as much distinction as anything that has appeared in 1908 or 1909—Bancroft and Lea and Parkman and Ropes and Schouler. The truth is that, defective as our organization might be, we stood, without knowing it, at the beginning of a new and most fruitful era in the development of American historiography. To the student of the history of historical writing there is nothing surprising in this. It was as natural that the great war for nationality should be followed within twenty years by a great outburst of historical activity

as that the Reformation should breed historians, or that the first epoch-making works of Niebuhr and Boeckh and Ranke in Germany, of Guizot and Mignet and the Thierry's in France, should appear within twenty years after the Napoleonic conflict. The time was as ripe for the American Historical Association in 1884 as it was for the Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde in 1819.

Yet the American Historical Association had a concrete genesis, and a parentage more tangible than the *Zeitgeist*. At a luncheon some fifteen years later, at the time of the Boston meeting, Professor Moses Coit Tyler publicly stated that the first suggestion of such an organization had come to him from President Daniel C. Gilman, who pointed to the value accruing from the meetings of such bodies as the American Oriental Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. No one who has known the creator of the Johns Hopkins University, his sympathetic intuition for the larger aspects of any department of intellectual endeavor, his acute perception of the means for advancing each particular science, will question the accuracy of the reminiscence. But no doubt it places the origin of the Association upon too narrow a basis. Many persons interested in history must have been impressed with the value of the American Social Science Association, founded in 1865, whose province was the whole circle of economic, political, and social science, and whose published proceedings commanded general respect; of the American Philological Association, founded in 1869; of the American Chemical Society (1876); of the Modern Language Association (1883), and of similar bodies. Some were manifestly influenced by the example of the National Academy of Sciences, incorporated in 1863. (Few if any knew that in 1835 an American Historical Society had been founded in Washington by Peter Force and others, had held a few annual meetings, with John Quincy Adams, Lewis Cass, and Levi Woodbury as its successive presidents, and had published a single volume of transactions.)

The call for the meeting at which the American Historical Association was founded was signed by the president and secretary of the Social Science Association (John Eaton and Frank B. Sanborn), Charles Kendall Adams of Ann Arbor, Moses Coit Tyler of Ithaca, and Herbert B. Adams. But it has never been questioned that the main influence in the movement was that of Herbert Adams, professor in the Johns Hopkins University.

Herbert Adams had come back from Germany in 1876 to take

part in the work of that novel university at Baltimore which was to be so potent a centre of influence in American higher education. Entering with enthusiasm into that development of American historical work whose promise he saw so clearly, he deliberately chose his part in the movement. To one with whom he walked in that first year, he declared that he saw before him two possible careers, that of the scholarly historian, especially the student of church history, and that of the organizer of a flourishing historical department in his university and of higher education in history in the country at large. He did not think himself capable of achieving both ends. He confessed that the former career would please him the best. Clever, well-educated, and energetic, though he had not the highest gifts of the historian, we can see that he would have attained a high degree of success in that role. But, he declared to his friend, he had definitely made up his mind that he could be of more use to the country by choosing the other alternative, and he should act on that conviction. For the chosen career, which he followed most usefully for many years, he was fitted by many high qualities—genuine devotion to history, catholic intellectual interests, the capacity to kindle enthusiasm in others, ingenuity in planning, skill in the management of men, tact, flexibility, and remarkable good nature. All these he brought to the service of the new historical association. It is not easy to exaggerate its good fortune in having as its chief motive power, throughout the formative years of its existence, a man who was at once so accomplished an organizer, so appreciative of scholarship, and so conciliatory in his conduct toward other leaders.

In September, 1883, Adams read before the American Social Science Association an elaborate paper on New Methods of Study in History,¹ dwelling especially on the seminary method, co-operation, and the organization of research. In the ensuing spring, it is recalled, his mind was actively occupied with the question, whether a general association of all those conspicuously interested in history, as teachers, investigators, and writers, might not be formed with good prospects of vitality and of success in promoting acquaintance, exchanging ideas, widening horizons, and pushing investigation into new fields. His habit of lecturing at Smith College each spring and spending the summer in the North gave him abundant opportunities to consult with other scholars to whom a similar project had occurred.

The result of these consultations was the issue in June, 1884,

¹ *Journal of Social Science*, III. 213-264.

of the call which has been mentioned. Taking advantage of the approaching annual meeting of the American Social Science Association, it summoned those who were interested to meet at the same time and place, Saratoga, September 9, to form an American Historical Association. Some forty responded to the call. A private gathering was first held, in the parlors of the United States Hotel, of those primarily interested in the problems of organization. Justin Winsor was chairman; Herbert Adams acted as secretary. The first question was that of relations to the American Social Science Association. General John Eaton, then president of that body, urged the evils of excessive specialization, the advantages of cherishing wider relations by organizing as a section of his society. Independence was however the desire of nearly all those who had assembled. President White of Cornell suggested that the advantages which General Eaton sought could readily be obtained by joint meetings with kindred societies; and this has in fact been, with great profit, the actual course of events. The American Economic Association, for instance, formed at the second meeting of the historical students, has met with them twelve times out of the twenty-four.² Independent organization having been resolved on, a committee was appointed to draw up a constitution; it consisted of Professors C. K. Adams and H. B. Adams, Dr. Clarence W. Bowen, Professors Ephraim Emerton and M. C. Tyler, and Mr. William B. Weeden.

The simple constitution then framed, and adopted the next day, has with slight alterations served the Association to the present time.³ But its preparation brought up at once some of the gravest questions of the society's future, questions vividly debated in the committee. Should the effort be made to form something like an Academy of History, small in numbers, imposing in the weight of its individual members, and exerting through that weight a powerful influence on the development of the science; or should the society be a more popular body, into which any respectable and educated person interested in history might be admitted? One who stood upon the losing side of the question has since described it as being "whether we should try to be as big as possible or as good as possible". This has a specious sound, but "good" in such matters is good in relation to the existing conditions and the pos-

² 1885, 1887, 1897, 1898, 1900-1907 inclusive.

³ The chief alterations have been, the increase of the number of elected members of the Executive Council from four to six, the provision whereby retiring presidents become members of that areopagus, and the creation of the additional office of Secretary of the Council.

sibilities of achievement. Nothing has prevented any member from presenting to the Association as learned and profound a paper as he might have presented to a select forty having thirty-nine specialties different from his; and in any body, the older heads have their full share of influence. On the other hand, how largely has the American public, scientific or other, shown itself disposed to defer to the authority, in any line, of forty Immortals—immortals voiceless for lack of endowment, and unable to obtain governmental support unless with governmental selection? Diffusion of influence, diffused participation, is the democratic mode. The older element is quickened and helped by the presence of the younger; the wiser, even, by the presence of those whom in American life they must perforce address. It would be hard to persuade anyone who has attended a meeting of the American Historical Association and carefully watched what goes on, in and out of the formal sessions, that a gathering from which nine-tenths of the present attendants were absent would do as much good for the common cause.

While the constitution was in process of formation, a beginning was made of that reading of papers which has ever since been the staple of the society's public proceedings. President White read that excellent paper "On Studies in General History and the History of Civilization" which stands first in the published transactions.⁴ Its doctrine, that, "precious as special investigations may be, most precious of all is that synthesis made by enlightened men looking over large fields, in the light of the best results of special historical research", is as valid and as much needed in 1909 as in 1884. A warning addressed to American historical teachers at the beginning of an era of intensive or seminary education, it has been justified by the difficulty, felt ever since, of reconciling the need of close training with the need of inspiring young *Gelehrten* to large views.

The other papers read were excellent types of the varieties since familiar in the proceedings of the Association. Contributions were read, in whole or in abstract, by Professor George W. Knight of Ohio State University, on Federal Land-Grants for Education in the Northwest Territory; by Dr. Edward Channing of Harvard on Town and County Government in the English Colonies of North America; by Mr. Charles H. Levermore of Johns Hopkins on the

⁴ *Papers*, I. 47-72. The first forty pages of that volume present a good official account of this first meeting. But not all members possess those five volumes of *Papers* which preceded the present *Annual Reports*, and the writer of these pages, the youngest of those who attended the original meeting of the society, took pains some years ago to obtain, from those who then survived, their recollections of its foundation. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

Founders of New Haven; by Professor T. F. Crane of Cornell on Some New Sources of Medieval History (popular traditions, songs, folk-tales, preachers' *exempla*); by Dr. Kuno Francke of Harvard on the progress of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*; by Dr. Justin Winsor on the *Narrative and Critical History of America*, of which the earliest volumes were then about to be issued; by Professor Moses Coit Tyler on the Influence of Thomas Paine on the Popular Resolution for Independence; and by Dr. Austin Scott of Washington on Constitutional Growth in the United States. A good programme to begin with, it will be conceded.

At the adjourned business meeting on the morning of September 10, the new-made constitution was presented and adopted. It may be worth while to record for the present generation the names of those who were enrolled as members on that morning: *C. K. Adams, *H. B. Adams, Clarence W. Bowen, *Samuel L. Caldwell, *Calvin H. Carter, *Mellen Chamberlain, Edward Channing, Mendes Cohen, T. F. Crane, W. H. Davis, *Charles Deane, Davis R. Dewey, *John Eaton, Melville Egleston, Ephraim Emerton, Kuno Francke, *Sydney H. Gay, William T. Harris, *Rutherford B. Hayes, J. F. Jameson, *Alexander Johnston, *Rufus King, Frederick J. Kingsbury, Charles H. Levermore, *J. C. Markham, *Charles W. Parsons, *Charles A. Peabody, *James Phelan, *John Meredith Read, Richard A. Rice, Austin Scott, Henry E. Scott, Allen C. Thomas, *Herbert Tuttle, *Moses Coit Tyler, *Francis A. Walker, William B. Weeden, Andrew D. White, *Justin Winsor, and *Carroll D. Wright. Mr. William A. Mowry was enrolled later in the same day. The asterisks, which indicate those who are no longer living, show that of the original forty-one only nineteen now survive. As one recalls who were at that time the men of distinction in history, it is seen that a striking proportion of them were present at this meeting, enough at all events to augur well for adequate support of the new society; and those who were youngest must count it among the chief pleasures derived from these earlier meetings that they can remember the constant and gentle kindness of Dr. Charles Deane, the bonhomme of Professor Moses Tyler, the winning courtesy of General Francis Walker, and the ready helpfulness of Mr. Justin Winsor.

In the election of officers with which the business session concluded, President Andrew D. White, whose professorship of history in the University of Michigan and subsequent teaching at Cornell had had so important an influence on the progress of the science in America, and who is happily still with us, was chosen as the Asso-

ciation's first president, Mr. Winsor and Professor C. K. Adams as vice-presidents, Professor H. B. Adams as secretary, Dr. Clarence W. Bowen of New York as treasurer, while the Executive Council was made up by adding to these officers Mr. William B. Weeden of Providence, Dr. Charles Deane, Professor M. C. Tyler, and Professor Emerton. The list was a weighty and representative one. But no other elections had so great a permanent value for the Association as the choice of Herbert Adams as secretary and of Dr. Bowen as treasurer. During the earlier years of the society most of the labor of attending to its affairs fell naturally upon these two. Of Dr. Adams we have already spoken; he remained secretary of the Association from its foundation to December, 1900, a few months before his early and lamented death. Of the treasurer it might be thought superfluous to speak, since he has been present at every meeting save one, and no one surely is better known to all the members. Yet no one who has watched the budgets of the Association, has seen the steady and remarkable growth of its resources, and can appreciate the labor involved in twenty-five years' tenure of such an office, could withhold the expression of gratitude for so generous a service, and for so thoughtful and effective a care of the Association's finances.

The new society was received with immediate favor. By the time of the second meeting, held at Saratoga in September, 1885, the number of members had increased to 287; by the time of the third meeting, seven months later, it was more than four hundred, including seventy-five life members; by 1890 there had come to be 620 members. A series of volumes entitled *Papers of the American Historical Association* was inaugurated, published in New York, in parts and in volumes, by Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons,⁵ and containing the secretary's reports of the meetings and the texts of papers presented on those occasions. The treasurer began at once the practice of funding a portion of the income, especially the life-membership fees; by December, 1889, when the Association had been in existence but five years, its funds amounted to \$4585. The simplicity of the early transactions is marked by the fact that in those years it was customary to hold no meetings of the Executive Council other than those held at the time of the annual meetings of the society itself, and that there were no standing committees until 1895. No settled practice prevailed, for some years, as to

⁵ Five of these volumes were published, 1885-1891. They are not now to be obtained from Messrs. Putnam, but from the secretary of the Association. This may be the best place to mention that a detailed list of the contents of all the Association's publications, arranged in a convenient form by Mr. A. Howard Clark, secretary, may be found at the end of vol. I. of the *Annual Report* for 1902.

time and place of meeting. Saratoga and the end of the summer vacation were tried twice. The third and fourth meetings were held in April, 1886, and May, 1887, term-time for academic members. For the fifth meeting, the latter part of the Christmas holidays was settled upon, and this date has been maintained ever since, with one exception. No meeting was held in December, 1892, or in December, 1893.⁶ Instead, advantage was taken of the World's Fair at Chicago to hold a meeting there in July, 1893—a meeting much overshadowed by that great spectacle. The social entertainments which have so often contributed to the pleasure—sometimes also to the distraction—of the members, began with a reception kindly offered by Mr. and Mrs. Winsor at the time of the fourth or Boston-Cambridge meeting. That meeting was also marked by the first excursions, to Wellesley College and to Plymouth, and by the first instance of a joint session of the American Historical Association and the American Economic Association, in which the presidents of the two associations (Mr. Winsor and General Walker) read their presidential addresses.

The following list shows the places and times of the successive meetings of the American Historical Association, the president officiating at each meeting, and the title of his presidential address:

1. Saratoga, September, 1884.
2. Saratoga, September, 1885. Andrew D. White. "The Influence of American Ideas upon the French Revolution".
3. Washington, April, 1886. George Bancroft. "Self-government".
4. Boston and Cambridge, May, 1887. Justin Winsor. "Manuscript Sources of American History: the Conspicuous Collections Extant".
5. Washington, December, 1888. William F. Poole. "The Early Northwest".
6. Washington, December, 1889. Charles Kendall Adams. "The Recent Historical Work in the Colleges and Universities of Europe and America".
7. Washington, December, 1890. John Jay. "The Demand for Education in American History".
8. Washington, December, 1891. William Wirt Henry. "The Causes which Produced the Virginia of the Revolutionary Period".
9. Chicago, July, 1893. James B. Angell. "The Inadequate Recognition of Diplomats by Historians".
10. Washington, December, 1894. Henry Adams. "The Tendency of History".
11. Washington, December, 1895. George F. Hoar. "Popular Discontent with Representative Government".
12. New York, December, 1896. Richard S. Storrs. "Contributions made to our National Development by Plain Men".

⁶ And thus it is that the New York meeting now approaching, at which the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Association is to be observed, is not the twenty-sixth but the twenty-fifth of its annual meetings.

13. Cleveland, December, 1897. James Schouler. "A New Federal Convention".

14. New Haven, December, 1898. George P. Fisher. "The Function of the Historian as a Judge of Historic Persons".

15. Boston and Cambridge, December, 1899. James Ford Rhodes. "History".

16. Detroit, December, 1900. Edward Eggleston. "The New History".

17. Washington, December, 1901. Charles Francis Adams. "An Undeveloped Function".

18. Philadelphia, December, 1902. Alfred T. Mahan. "Subordination in Historical Treatment".

19. New Orleans, December, 1903. Henry C. Lea. "Ethical Values in History".

20. Chicago, December, 1904. Goldwin Smith. "The Treatment of History".

21. Baltimore and Washington, December, 1905. John B. McMaster. "Old Standards of Public Morals".

22. Providence, December, 1906. Simeon E. Baldwin. "Religion Still the Key to History".

23. Madison, December, 1907. J. Franklin Jameson. "The American Acta Sanctorum".

24. Washington and Richmond, December, 1908. George B. Adams. "History and the Philosophy of History".

The choice of the venerable George Bancroft for president, at the close of the second meeting, made it natural that the third meeting should be held in Washington, his winter home. "It is a striking evidence of the national aims of this growing association", says the secretary in his report, "that it should so early have advanced upon Washington." It is certain that such an advance was early contemplated by him and by other leading members, for at the second meeting the Executive Council referred to a committee consisting of Justin Winsor, Theodore F. Dwight, and Herbert Adams, the question of seeking incorporation by Congress in the District of Columbia. The thought of exerting an influence upon the action of the national government in historical matters appeared at the same early date, when, after a paper by Eugene Schuyler on Materials for American History in Foreign Archives, the Association, on his motion, instructed the Council to represent to the government the advantages and the advisability of cataloguing all such materials dated before 1800, and copying and printing the most important of them.

Though influence upon the government might prove to be a plant of slow growth, some good effects from the early movement upon Washington were immediately apparent. The attendance took on a wider range, less confined to the northeastern parts of the country

than that of the first two meetings had been. There were good papers on the history of the Northwest, on that of events centering in Washington, and on Canadian history. The president of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec began, and continued for several years, to contribute an annual survey of Canadian historical progress. Military historians, Northern and Southern, engaged in friendly public discussion, only twenty-one years after the Civil War, of campaigns in which Washington and Richmond were the strategic centres.

No other feature of this third meeting was so interesting as the presence of George Bancroft in the chair. Sprightly and energetic at the age of eighty-six, he presided with kindly enthusiasm and encouragement at all the morning sessions and at the concluding evening session. None who were present will forget the final scene, when, in moving a vote of thanks to the venerable presiding officer, Senator Hoar with classic eloquence compared the rounded completeness of his historical achievement with that of Gibbon, and congratulated him that it had been his inspiring fortune to chronicle, not decline and fall, but the origin and vigorous adolescence of a nation still marked by youth and promise. A still greater historical veteran passed across the stage at the time of the same meeting. The Association at its second meeting had elected, as its sole honorary member, Leopold von Ranke. Bancroft had notified him of the election, in terms of affectionate regard. His note of acceptance, full of good-will toward the new society of transatlantic colleagues, so many of whom revered him as the chief master of their profession, was read at the third meeting;⁷ he died in the ensuing April, at the ripe age of ninety.

To the biographical sketch of Ranke which Adams as secretary contributed to the next meeting⁸ he appended a statement of Ranke's important work in bringing into existence, organizing, and directing the Historical Commission connected with the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. At this fourth or Boston-Cambridge meeting a committee was appointed, on motion of Professor Tyler, "to take into consideration so much of the President's address as relates to the possible assistance of the National Government in collecting, preserving and calendaring American historical manuscripts", a subject to one part of which Professor Tyler had given earnest attention in a paper read at the preceding meeting, on the Neglect and Destruction of Historical Materials in this Country. On the report of his

⁷ The correspondence is in *Papers*, I. 483, II. 14. The Association has since elected to honorary membership William Stubbs, Samuel Rawson Gardiner, Theodor Mommsen, and James Bryce.

⁸ *Papers*, III. 101-133.

committee, which pointed to many precedents in the practice of other governments, a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Winsor was now appointed, to test opinion and consult the government on the establishment of a national commission for the collection, preservation, and utilization of historical manuscripts. All signs pointed to a more definite "movement on Washington", already a centre of considerable scientific activity. When the Association held its fifth meeting there, in the last days of December, 1888,⁹ Mr. Winsor was able to announce, on behalf of the committee appointed at Saratoga three years before, that an act of incorporation had passed the two houses of Congress. In the Senate its sponsor had been Senator Hoar; in the House, Hon. James Phelan of Tennessee, a promising young representative and a Leipzig doctor in history.

The act of incorporation received the signature of President Cleveland on January 4, 1889. It incorporated the American Historical Association in the District of Columbia, "for the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts, and for kindred purposes in the interest of American history and of history in America". It provided that the Association should have its principal office in Washington, that it should report annually to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution concerning its proceedings and the condition of historical study in America, and that that official should communicate to Congress the whole of such reports, or such portions thereof as he should see fit. The act still stands unmodified, as the charter of the Association.

It is obvious that the securing of such legislation constituted a turning-point in the history of the society. Some members viewed the governmental connection with aversion, and long regarded its results with uneasiness. No doubt it has its drawbacks, as the patronage of "the great" had in the eighteenth century, and that of monarchs before and since. The chief limitation operates through the censorship vested in the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. That official will always be a man trained in the atmosphere and methods of the physical sciences rather than in those of history. His judgment, or that of his staff, respecting the merits or value of historical contributions and materials will be as little secure as would be the judgment of historians respecting scientific monographs. But he is likely to be a discreet man, aware of his limitations, and of the probability that an historical association can judge better as to what publications will advance the cause of history than

⁹ It had been intended to hold the meeting in Columbus, Ohio, in some connection with the centennial commemoration of the settlement of Ohio, but the plan fell through.

can the most eminent student of science—provided only that the association has developed the machinery for bringing its best intelligence to bear upon the question.

In practice, the limitation has hardly been felt except in three particulars, and one of these is perhaps imaginary. It has been thought by some that the necessity of a governmental *imprimatur* for the inclusion of any piece in the *Annual Reports* has worked to the disadvantage of contributions to European as contrasted with American history. As a matter of fact, however, the *Annual Reports* for the first ten years after the *Papers* ceased show almost exactly the same percentage of articles devoted to European history as is shown in the volumes of the *Papers*. If in recent years the proportionate number of pages devoted to European history seems less, it is not because of any censorship, but because of the large amounts of space given to original documents, archive reports, and the like, for these are likely, from the very nature of the case, to be prevailingly American in their subjects. So far as the action of the Smithsonian Institution is concerned, the language of the guiding statute is perfectly explicit, the interests “of American history and of history in America” being both equally recognized, and this, as is well remembered, having been done with definite intention.

The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution is likely, in the exercise of this somewhat anomalous function, to confine himself to the exclusion, from a report presented to Congress, of matter such as is usually excluded from other reports offered to that body. This, however, effects two serious limitations, the one based on political, the other on religious, grounds. In the first place, it is not probable, for instance, that the Association could print in a governmental volume such an article as that which Professor Hart contributed to the third volume of the old *Papers*, “The Biography of a River and Harbor Bill”, a most plain-spoken analysis of recent Congressional proceedings. In the second place, Congress has a peculiar traditional feeling with regard to the printing of religious matter. The religion of the Hopi or the Igorrote is deemed a legitimate subject for historical discussion in a scientific publication of the government. Not so the Christian religion. While excellent reasons for restraint in the treatment of its history, in volumes paid for by public taxation, must occur to every right-thinking mind, instances of unreasonable objection on the part of individual members, or of unreasonable clamor on the part of portions of the public, have pushed Congress into strange extremes of caution. An impartial essay on the Spiritual Franciscans of the thirteenth century or the Interdict as practised in the twelfth would seem to be a per-

fectly non-explosive compound; but the authorities of the Smithsonian Institution, interpreting the mind of Congress as by long experience they have found it, have ruled that such discussions fall outside the lines of the *Annual Reports*. The limitation thus effected is a grave one, especially in the history of the Middle Ages, for medieval history with the Church omitted would almost be *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out. The American Society of Church History, founded in 1888, was in 1896 fused with the American Historical Association, becoming the Church History Section of the larger body. That it did not prosper as such a section was largely due to the fact that its papers, in too many cases, could not be treated on an equality with those of the main body in respect to publication.

On the other hand, few members now doubt that the establishment of governmental connection, in the form prescribed by the act of incorporation, was a wise step. That the act tended to place an expert body in the position of adviser to the government in historical matters was no small gain in a democratic country, imperfectly as the attribution has yet been realized. All civilized governments do more or less for history, through machinery of various types. Large as the American Historical Association is, it is so organized as to constitute perhaps as satisfactory an instrument as the United States government is likely to develop, for the performance of its historical functions. But, apart from this prospect, nearly all the advantages resulting from the connection may be summed up as results of the arrangement whereby the *Annual Reports* were to be printed at government expense. To the government this had the great advantage that it guaranteed the maintenance of a certain standard in at least a volume or two of that printed historical matter which, as we have seen, governments are bound to issue. To the society, it is not too much to say, the new arrangement made all the difference between having to spend most of its revenue in printer's bills and having nearly all of it free to expend in various historical good works. As membership and revenue have increased, this has become a vitally important gain. If there is anything that distinguishes the American Historical Association (anything, we may add in parenthesis, which can be pointed to as the main cause of its remarkable harmony), it is the abundance of the organized scientific activities which it has added to the mere reading of papers in annual convention. Now all these have been made possible by that freedom from printer's bills which the exchequer won through the act of January 4, 1889.

That something practical should be accomplished, something

beyond mere paper-reading and conference, was early desired by some members. At the third meeting Professor Moses Tyler followed up his paper already mentioned, on the Neglect and Destruction of Historical Materials in this Country, by offering a resolution, which was adopted, to the effect that, with a view to the better security of such materials, public attention should be extensively called to the superior opportunities which college libraries and historical societies afforded for their preservation by permanent institutions and in fire-proof repositories. Members were urged to use their influence in persuading owners of historical manuscripts to provide for their security and usefulness through such means. How Professor Tyler followed this at the next meeting with suggestions of governmental action has already been related.

At the seventh meeting another member suggested that a body of original materials for American political history be presented, with a descriptive statement, at each annual meeting, and, if approved by the Executive Council and duly edited by an appointed committee, be incorporated in the *Annual Report*. Some such materials, sent from the Bodleian Library, were printed in the report for 1892. Just before the meeting of 1894 the same member, in a letter to the Council, proposed the formation of a Historical Manuscripts Commission, a standing committee of the Association, modelled on the British Historical Manuscripts Commission, whose function it should be to collect information concerning manuscripts relating to American history, especially those in private hands and exposed to destruction, and to edit portions of them for printing in the *Annual Reports*. At the meeting itself, Mr. A. Howard Clark, at the close of a valuable paper on What the United States Government has done for History, suggested that the Association, through a system of standing committees, might secure extensive information respecting historical manuscripts, might furnish systematic statements on the historical work of the colleges, universities, and historical societies, and might even some time attempt the preparation of a comprehensive bibliography of American history. At first the Council, under the lead of Mr. Winsor, attempted another mode of dealing with the problem of scattered manuscript materials in private hands. A committee was appointed, at the close of this meeting of December, 1894, to memorialize Congress for the establishment of a Historical Manuscripts Commission.¹⁰ The effort not meeting with success, the Association in December, 1895, established a Historical Manuscripts Commission of its own.

Thus was brought into existence the first of those standing

¹⁰ At the Chicago meeting, July, 1893, a committee had been appointed to memorialize Congress for the establishment of a national archive.

committees whose work has since formed so large a part of the Association's activities and has drawn into its service the executive talents of so many members. Other practical activities had also been entered upon or essayed. At the sixth meeting, in the course of a paper by Professor W. P. Trent, the suggestion was made that state and local historical societies might annually report to the American Historical Association. One such report, indeed, was then made, which Dr. Adams hailed as foreshadowing a series. But co-operation with state and local historical societies remained spasmodic until the organization in 1904 of those annual conferences of workers in such societies, which have ever since been a feature of the annual meetings. At the sixth meeting also, Mr. Paul Leicester Ford presented a plan for a bibliography of the historical writings of the members of the Association. A partial bibliography of this sort appeared in the first *Annual Report* issued from the Government Printing Office, that for 1889, and was continued in those of the next three years. The *Annual Report* for 1890 contained the first installment of a bibliography of the publications of American historical societies, by Mr. Appleton P. C. Griffin, completed by the second installment two years later, and reissued in a completer form in the report for 1895, and again, much elaborated, in 1905.

Despite these signs of useful activity, however, it is not to be denied that at the end of the year 1895, seven years after incorporation, there were evidences of disquietude and discontent. With assets of \$8,000 and current annual expenses not more than forty per cent. of its income, it was felt that the Association might do more. It was doubted if it was holding its own in influence upon the historical profession. The number of members had remained nearly stationary since incorporation. When a conference at New York in April, 1895, chiefly representative of the leading universities, established the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW as the general organ of the profession—a position which, we may without impropriety say, was immediately accorded to it—it was established independently of the American Historical Association, and supported for three years by a separate association of guarantors. The voluminous programmes of the most recent meetings had seemed to lack purpose, and the meetings themselves to fall short in vivacity and effect. Progressive members of the Council attempted to improve conditions, by encouraging the activities described above, by planning for a series of prize essays, more elaborate than the usual contributions to the annual volumes, and by various other devices. But it seemed to the wisest that no means of averting stagnation and

recovering tone to the society would be so effectual as to break up the habit of perpetual meeting in Washington. Seven of the last nine annual meetings had been held there. It is not a literary nor, characteristically, a university town. What was more important, it was far from central to the members. The geographical centre of the membership has always lain some two degrees of latitude farther north. A policy of migration, which would make it easy for a great number of the members to attend at least some of the meetings, would, it was believed, administer the needed tonic to the Association. Accordingly, an active group of members, led by Professor George Burton Adams in the Council, but aided from without by Professors William A. Dunning and Albert Bushnell Hart—three men to whose combined sagacity and energy the society owed much at this second turning-point in its career, and has owed much ever since—engaged in a vigorous effort to break the chain of habit and set the Association upon its travels again.

To the vigilant secretary, Herbert Adams, the thought of migration was distinctly unwelcome. He had worked hard for the Washington connection and had so shaped the first *Annual Reports* as to fortify it. He had cemented it by securing the election, as assistant secretary, of an official of the National Museum, allied to the Smithsonian Institution, Mr. A. Howard Clark (who later succeeded him as secretary, and for ten years in the one office and for nearly nine years in the other performed self-sacrificing services to the society which few were in a position to appreciate). Adams valued the Washington connection highly, and feared to endanger it by migration. For him and for many other members the annual hospitality of the Columbian University and the National Museum, of the Cosmos Club, and of Mr. and Mrs. Horatio King, had come to invest the meetings with a comfortable sense of habit; and at first they were indisposed to go farther than the earlier expression of the Council, that Washington was the best place for meetings in winter, but that summer meetings might be held at discretion in any attractive place. At the meeting of December, 1895, however, a committee on time and place of meeting was appointed which was committed to the progressive policy. It reported in favor of holding the twelfth annual meeting in New York City, and its report was adopted.

The success of the experiment was so pronounced that the secretary, among whose faults no one had ever noted inflexibility or pride of opinion, was permanently convinced, and made no opposition to further migration. The New York meeting was well-planned, well-attended, interesting, and vivacious. It resulted in the addition of

two hundred members, including the membership of the American Society of Church History. It inaugurated those profitable discussions of pedagogic problems in history, which, as the academics have come to be the prevailing element in the attendance, have assumed so large a place in the Association's proceedings. At the instance of Professor Morse Stephens it appointed the Committee of Seven on the Teaching of History in Secondary Schools, whose report, published in the *Annual Report* for 1898 and as a separate volume, has done so much to improve the quality of teaching in that grade and to increase the sense of its importance and dignity. It received the first report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, embracing several hundred pages of documentary material.

The policy of migration, vindicated by its immediate effects, was permanently accepted. After meetings in Cleveland and New Haven, a practice was informally adopted which safeguards the Washington connection and minimizes competition for the privilege of entertaining the Association, yet secures the benefits of mobility. It is a practice of rotation, whereby the Association meets one year in an Eastern city, the next in a Western city, the third in Washington, where the official headquarters are situated. Substantially though not inflexibly maintained, this practice has brought to the society all the advantages originally predicted by the advocates of migration, and to many towns and universities the quickening influence of a national historical gathering.

Since the turning of this point the American Historical Association has sailed forward prosperously on an even keel. The acts of its annual meetings, are they not written in the successive April numbers of this journal? It must suffice here, to note the main steps of progress, and especially the inception, one after another, of those activities the sum of which gives to the Association its present character. By an arrangement partially set in operation at the Cleveland meeting of 1897 and consummated at the New Haven meeting of 1898, the society came to the aid of the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, providing for its support and for its distribution to all members, on terms which in no way impair its independence. A standing Committee on Bibliography, and a general standing committee on the local and state historical interests of the Association, were also instituted in 1898, a standing Committee on Publications in 1899. To the Historical Manuscripts Commission, which among other things has published the correspondence of Calhoun, of Chase, and of the French ministers of President Washington's time, was added in the last-named year a Public Archives Commission, charged to investigate and report, from the point of view

of the historical student, upon the character, contents, and administration of public archives in the United States. It has developed its work with extraordinary vigor, and has already published valuable reports on the archives of a majority of the states. The prize for an historical essay, first bestowed in December, 1895, and subsequently named the Justin Winsor Prize, has now become confined to American history. For essays in European history another prize was established in 1903, and fitly named the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize, in memory of the society's first secretary, who had ended his useful and public-spirited life in 1901, bequeathing to the Association a considerable portion of his property. In 1902 a series of volumes embracing the chief "Original Narratives of Early American History" was resolved upon. In 1903 provision was made for the formation of a Pacific Coast Branch, holding separate meetings, as distance makes needful, yet in reality strengthening the parent body. In 1904, after the analogy of the Committee of Seven, a Committee of Eight on the Teaching of History in Elementary Schools was appointed, whose report is now nearly ready for issue. The annual meeting of 1906 saw a reorganization of the Committee on Publications, on an improved plan adapted to the new form of Congressional appropriations for printing, while that of 1908 erected the prize essays into an independent series of the Association's publications, and provided for a committee to prepare, with the co-operation of a representative British committee, a select bibliography of modern English history.

Meanwhile the membership of the Association, which from 1895 to 1905 grew at a rate approaching two hundred per annum, stands now at 2500. Its funds amount to \$26,000. It enjoys an annual revenue of \$8000, and a Congressional appropriation which is virtually a credit of \$7000 per annum with the Government Printing Office. Probably no historical society in the world is more numerous; it might perhaps be successfully maintained that none is more extensively useful. If the quality of all that it does is not yet of ideal excellence, it may be that its work is done as well as can be expected from an organization no member of which can give to its concerns more than a minor portion of his time. At all events, it has played an effective part in the historical progress of the last twenty-five years, and none of those who took part in its foundation at Saratoga, in that now remote September, need feel regret at his share in the transaction. That it may flourish abundantly in the future must be the wish of all who care for the interests "of American history and of history in America".

J. FRANKLIN JAMESON.